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Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

Letter dated 12 October 2010 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the General Assembly

I have the honour to refer to General Assembly resolution 60/124, by which the Assembly established the Advisory Group to advise me on the use and impact of the Central Emergency Response Fund. In accordance with the provisions of paragraph 21 of the resolution, I have the honour to transmit herewith a note on the outcome of the meeting of the Advisory Group held in New York on 1 July 2010 (see annex).

The note summarizes the key points raised by the Advisory Group during its discussions on both the management of the Fund and its impact on humanitarian operations. The Group welcomed the issuance of the revised Secretary-General's bulletin on the Fund (ST/SGB/2010/5) on 23 April 2010. It also discussed how the Fund addresses several ongoing dilemmas in humanitarian aid and acknowledged the very important role that the Fund plays in consistently promoting early and timely action. The Group praised the high level of support for the Fund among General Assembly members and observer missions, of which 120 have pledged or contributed to the Fund, and encouraged the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to broaden and deepen the donor base still further.

I should be grateful if you would bring the present letter and its annex to the attention of the Member States and observer missions.

(*Signed*) **BAN** Ki-moon

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Annex

Meeting of the Advisory Group of the Central Emergency Response Fund (1 July 2010)

Recommendations and conclusions

1. The Advisory Group of the Central Emergency Response Fund was established by the General Assembly in resolution 60/124 to advise the Secretary-General, through the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, on the use and impact of the Fund. The Group's first meeting of 2010 was held in New York on 1 July, with 11 Advisory Group members in attendance. The meeting was presided over by the Chair of the Group, Ms. Yoka Brandt (Netherlands).

2. The Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator provided an update on the use and management of the Fund since the Group's last meeting in November 2009. He also reported on progress made in 2010, including the piloting of the draft performance and accountability framework in Kenya; the issuance of a revised Secretary General's bulletin on the Fund; and the approval by the Controller of an umbrella letter of understanding between the Fund and United Nations agencies and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The Group had the opportunity to discuss the relationship between the Fund and other elements of humanitarian reform with partners from the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. The Group also discussed the upcoming five-year evaluation of the Fund, which was requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 63/139.

3. Following these discussions, the Group would like to offer the following findings and recommendations:

Management

4. The Group concluded that the Fund continues to be managed effectively, with improvements made over the years, and encouraged the Emergency Relief Coordinator and the Fund secretariat to make sure that this positive trend is continued. Notwithstanding the global financial situation, the Group encouraged efforts to reach the goal set by the General Assembly of $450 million in annual funding for the grant element. The Group praised the high level of support for the Fund among General Assembly members and observer missions, of which 120 have pledged or contributed to the Fund, and encouraged the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to broaden and deepen the donor base still further.

5. The Advisory Group discussed how the Fund relates to several ongoing dilemmas in humanitarian aid, and acknowledged the very important role that the Fund plays in consistently promoting early and timely action and response to reduce loss of life, by allocating funds to prevent disasters from turning into major catastrophes. The Group raised concerns about the sustainability of funding in situations where the Fund is the main source of income for United Nations humanitarian agencies and their partners. They also discussed the provision of funding for large-scale and high-profile emergencies, for which substantial funding from major donors is highly likely. In such cases, it was noted that the timely disbursements of funds can be critical to jump-starting urgent life-saving activities, which are then complemented by funds from major donors.

number of United Nations agencies. The Group noted that the Standing Committee partners were very positive about the role of the Fund as a rapid-response mechanism, and about the support for common services as well as agency-specific programming. The discussion centred on the speed of disbursements by United Nations agencies and IOM to NGOs, on ensuring that the five-year evaluation of the Fund was tightly focused, and on the question whether funds should be available for preparedness and early recovery. These issues will continue to be of interest to the Group and will be discussed at the next Advisory Group meeting.

Administrative matters

10. The Group discussed the venue for the next meeting and requested the Fund secretariat to investigate the possibility of holding the next meeting in Nairobi. The Group expressed its intention to discuss the following items at the next meeting: the five-year evaluation of the Fund; the roll-out of the performance and accountability framework; the evaluation of the use of the Fund that was conducted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; and the finalization of the management response matrix to the independent two-year evaluation. The Advisory Group requested the Fund secretariat to provide papers on the efforts to harmonize the Fund with country-based pooled funds; shifts in allocation patterns (by agency, sector and country); and issues related to the transfer of funds to NGOs.